

has an estimated 64 votes in the Senate, considerably more than the 60 needed. The addition of seven Democratic senators, who replaced seven Republican opponents of the bill, together with the eight remaining Republicans who supported the bill, should assure that our bill will have significantly more than the 57 Senate votes it received in 2007. We are equally encouraged that President-elect Barack Obama, who was a co-sponsor of the bill in the Senate, will sign the D.C. House Voting Rights Act when it reaches his desk.

My service in Congress has been defined by the search for ways to get full representation for the city where my family has lived since before the Civil War. That search has been guided by the pursuit of the maximum that was possible, including the two-day debate followed by the first and only vote on statehood more than 10 years ago, the vote I won in the Committee of the Whole during my second term, and the "No Taxation Without Representation" Act for votes in both the House and Senate. Our struggle has always been driven by what was required but we also have insisted on all that was possible, as with the District's first floor vote, the Committee of the Whole vote on some but not all matters on the House floor and the Home Rule Act, the path-breaking bill enacted before I came to Congress that gave the city partial self-government.

The Congress, which has always been divided by regional and parochial concerns, virtually never does all that is required at one time, even granting a vote to American citizens who are second per capita in Federal income taxes paid to support their Government and served in every war, including the war that created our country. However, the people of the District of Columbia have never ceased demanding the full measure of their rights, while insisting on all that is possible for each generation. The people of the Nation's proud capital will never give up until achieving their full rights as American citizens. Today's bill is another big step to achieve full and equal citizenship.

INTRODUCTION OF DECEPTIVE PRACTICES AND VOTER INTIMIDATION PREVENTION ACT OF 2009

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 6, 2009

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, today I rise to introduce the Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act of 2009. During our elections, including the 2008 election, we have witnessed numerous attempts, some of them successful, to disenfranchise our eligible voters. Deceptive practices and voter intimidation, age-old voter disenfranchisement tactics, continue to keep voters away from the polls today.

The Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act is a critical effort in ensuring fairness and integrity in our elections. It is a direct response to the fraudulent tactics used to undermine our elections. Every eligible voter should be able to vote free of intimidation, harassment, and harm.

Numerous accounts indicate that deceptive practices have been employed throughout the

country in our elections. Voters have been told to vote on the wrong day. They have been told they could not vote with outstanding parking tickets. Ultimately, they were misled, deceived, and disenfranchised.

During the 2008 election, a phony flyer circulated in Virginia telling Democratic voters that they were to vote on Wednesday instead of Tuesday. During the 2006 midterm, Latino voters in Orange County, California, were threatened with incarceration if they voted and African American voters in Prince George's County, Maryland were given fliers with false endorsements. As evidenced in California and Maryland, our most vulnerable voters—immigrants and minorities—are often those voters that are targeted for deceptive practices.

No matter who is targeted for these tactics, however, such actions are despicable and those responsible for them must be held accountable. This country's long history of voter suppression must end now. We must protect the right to vote for all of our citizens and that is what this legislation will enable us to do.

Under this legislation, those that engage in deceptive practices and voter intimidation will be held accountable. Deceptive electioneering practices are clearly defined and prohibited so there is no confusion as to the rights and protections afforded voters.

Additionally, the Federal Government will be held responsible for protecting and advancing the right to vote. The Attorney General and the Department of Justice are required to combat and counteract deceptive practices. These measures will ensure that voters are not left to fend for themselves when their right to vote is threatened.

If we allow deceptive practices and other such behavior to continue, we jeopardize the very core of our democracy, the right to vote. I ask that my colleagues in the Congress stand with me in support of this legislation, so that we may begin eliminating barriers to the polls.

INTRODUCTION OF THE VOTING OPPORTUNITY AND TECHNOLOGY ENHANCEMENT RIGHTS (VOTER) ACT OF 2009

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 6, 2009

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, today I rise to introduce the Voting Opportunity and Technology Enhancement Rights or VOTER Act of 2009. I introduce this legislation, more than 200 years after the founding of our democracy, because we have yet to realize a government that is truly representative of the principle, "of the people, by the people." Not until every eligible voter has the opportunity to cast a ballot and have that ballot counted, will we have a proper democracy.

Though the 2008 Election did not present the widespread irregularities and improprieties that were witnessed during the 2000 and 2004 Elections, it was still an election in which voter disenfranchisement was attempted and accomplished. Voters' names are still missing from voter rolls. Voter harassment and intimidation continues.

In fact, over the years, the methods that are used to disenfranchise voters have just be-

come more contemporary and sophisticated as evidenced during the 2008 Election. For example, in my home State of Michigan, in the midst of the current subprime mortgage crisis, a strategy to challenge a voter's eligibility based on home foreclosure status was devised. In Virginia, a flyer telling Democrats to vote on Wednesday November 5, 2008, circulated.

Anything short of a perfect election system is unacceptable. I have introduced VOTER so that we may work towards a more perfect system, one that reflects legitimacy, integrity, and inclusivity. VOTER will protect and expand voting rights in Federal elections, as well as ensure the proper administration of Federal elections.

VOTER will:

- (1) provide for a uniform Federal write-in absentee ballot;
- (2) require States to provide for a verified audit trail;
- (3) count provisional ballots cast in the proper State;
- (4) properly allocate voting machines and poll workers;
- (5) provide for election day voter registration;
- (6) protect against improper purging of registration lists;
- (7) mandate early voting;
- (8) require verification and audit ability for punch cards;
- (9) simplify voter registration requirements;
- (10) allow voter identification by written affidavit;
- (11) provide for a study of nonpartisan election boards;
- (12) strengthen the EAC with funding and resources;
- (13) require the EAC to (a) enhance training for election officials; (b) require the use of publicly available open source software; (c) provide uniform standards for vote recounts; and (d) prohibit voting machine companies from engaging in political activities;
- (14) prohibit deceptive practices and intimidation;
- (15) prohibit caging and other questionable challenges;
- (16) restore voting rights to former felons; and
- (17) treat Election Day as a federal holiday.

Some of these initiatives have already been implemented by States, the success of which was observed during the 2008 Election. There are 32 States that currently provide early voting, including Florida, a State that witnessed over one million voters turn out to the polls the weekend before the election. There are also 28 States that currently provide no-excuse absentee voting.

Such practices were critical to managing an unprecedented voter turnout. More than 130 million people turned out to vote in the 2008 Election, the highest turnout in any presidential election. With this many longtime and new voters engaged in the 2008 election process, I suspect that voter participation will only increase in 2012.

As such, we must pledge to fight for election reform in this Congress. The right to vote and to have that vote counted is one of our democracy's most fundamental principles. It is with VOTER that I intend to protect this fundamental principle, and I ask that my colleagues in this Congress join me in this fight for fair and just elections.